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Thomas Carlyle.

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OBITER DICTA.

CARLYLE.

THE accomplishments of our race have of late become so varied, that it is often no easy task to assign him whom we would judge to his proper station among men; and yet, until this has been done, the guns of our criticism cannot be accurately levelled, and as a consequence the greater part of our fire must remain futile. He, for example, who would essay to take account of Mr. Gladstone, must read much else besides Hansard; he must brush up his Homer, and set himself to acquire some theology. The place of Greece in the providential order of the world, and of laymen in the Church of England, must be considered, together with a host of other subjects of much apparent irrelevance to a statesman's life. So too in the case of his distinguished rival, whose death eclipsed the gayety of politics and banished epigram from Parliament: keen must be the critical faculty which can nicely discern where the novelist ended and the statesman began in Benjamin Disraeli.

Happily, no such difficulty is now before us. Thomas Carlyle was a writer of books, and he was nothing else. Beneath this judgment he would have winced, but have remained silent, for the facts are so.

Little men sometimes, though not perhaps so often as is taken for granted, complain of their destiny, and think they have been hardly treated, in that they have been allowed to remain so undeniably small; but great men,

with hardly an exception, nauseate their greatness, for not being of the particular sort they most fancy. The poet Gray was passionately fond, so his biographers tell us, of military history; but he took no Quebec. General Wolfe took Quebec, and whilst he was taking it, recorded the fact that he would sooner have written Gray's "Elegy"; and so Carlyle—who panted for action, who hated eloquence, whose heroes were Cromwell and Wellington, Arkwright and the "rugged Brindley," who beheld with pride and no ignoble envy the bridge at Auldgarth his mason-father had helped to build half a century before, and then exclaimed, "A noble craft, that of a mason; a good building will last longer than most books—than one book in a million"; who despised men of letters, and abhorred the "reading public"; whose gospel was Silence and Action—spent his life in talking and writing; and his legacy to the world is thirty-four volumes octavo.

There is a familiar melancholy in this; but the critic has no need to grow sentimental. We must have men of thought as well as men of action: poets as much as generals; authors no less than artizans; libraries at least as much as militia; and therefore we may accept and proceed critically to examine Carlyle's thirty-four volumes, remaining somewhat indifferent to the fact that had he had the fashioning of his own destiny, we should have had at his hands blows instead of books.

Taking him, then, as he was—a man of letters—perhaps the best type of such since Dr. Johnson died in Fleet street, what are we to say of his thirty-four volumes?

In them are to be found criticism, biography, history, politics, poetry, and religion. I mention this variety because of a foolish notion, at one time often found suitably lodged in heads otherwise empty, that Carlyle was a passionate old man, dominated by two or three

extravagant ideas, to which he was forever giving utterance in language of equal extravagance. The thirty-four volumes octavo render this opinion untenable by those who can read. Carlyle cannot be killed by an epigram, nor can the many influences that moulded him be referred to any single source. The rich banquet his genius has spread for us is of many courses. The fire and fury of the Latter-Day Pamphlets may be disregarded by the peaceful soul, and the preference given to the "Past" of "Past and Present," which with its intense and sympathetic mediævalism, might have been written by a Tractarian. The "Life of Sterling" is the favorite book of many who would sooner pick oakum than read "Frederick the Great" all through; whilst the mere student of *belles lettres* may attach importance to the essays on Johnson, Burns, and Scott, on Voltaire and Diderot, on Goethe and Novalis, and yet remain blankly indifferent to "Sartor Resartus" and "The French Revolution."

But true as this is, it is none the less true that, excepting possibly the "Life of Schiller," Carlyle wrote nothing not clearly recognizable as his. All his books are his very own—bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh. They are not stolen goods, nor elegant exhibitions of recently and hastily acquired wares.

This being so, it may be as well if, before proceeding any further, I attempt, with a scrupulous regard to brevity, to state what I take to be the invariable indications of Mr. Carlyle's literary handiwork—the tokens of his presence—"Thomas Carlyle, his mark."

First of all, it may be stated, without a shadow of a doubt, that he is one of those who would sooner be wrong with Plato than right with Aristotle; in one word, he is a mystic. What he says of Novalis may with equal truth be said of himself: "He belongs to that class of persons who do not recognize the syllogistic method as the chief organ for inves-

tigating truth, or feel themselves bound at all times to stop short where its light fails them. Many of his opinions he would despair of proving in the most patient court of law, and would remain well content that they should be disbelieved there." In philosophy we shall not be very far wrong if we rank Carlyle as a follower of Bishop Berkeley; for an idealist he undoubtedly was. "Matter," says he, "exists only spiritually, and to represent some idea, and body it forth. Heaven and Earth are but the time-vesture of the Eternal. The Universe is but one vast symbol of God; nay, if thou wilt have it, what is man himself but a symbol of God? Is not all that he does symbolical, a revelation to sense of the mystic God-given force that is in him?—a gospel of Freedom, which he, the 'Messias of Nature,' preaches as he can by act and word." "Yes, Friends," he elsewhere observes, "not our logical mensurative faculty, but our imaginative one, is King over us, I might say Priest and Prophet, to lead us heavenward, or magician and wizard to lead us hellward. The understanding is indeed thy window—too clear thou canst not make it; but phantasy is thy eye, with its color-giving retina, healthy or diseased." It would be easy to multiply instances of this, the most obvious and interesting trait of Mr. Carlyle's writing; but I must bring my remarks upon it to a close by reminding you of his two favorite quotations, which have both significance. One from Shakespeare's *Tempest*:

"We are such stuff
As dreams are made of, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep;"

the other, the exclamation of the Earth-spirit, in Goethe's *Faust*:

"'Tis thus at the roaring loom of Time I ply,
And weave for God the garment thou seest Him by."

But this is but one side of Carlyle. There is another as strongly marked, which is his second note ; and that is what he somewhere calls "his stubborn realism." The combination of the two is as charming as it is rare. No one at all acquainted with his writings can fail to remember his almost excessive love of detail ; his lively taste for facts, simply as facts. Imaginary joys and sorrows may extort from him nothing but grunts and snorts ; but let him only worry out for himself, from that great dust-heap called "history," some undoubted fact of human and tender interest, and, however small it may be, relating possibly to some one hardly known, and playing but a small part in the events he is recording, and he will wax amazingly sentimental, and perhaps shed as many real tears as Sterne or Dickens do sham ones over their figments. This realism of Carlyle's gives a great charm to his histories and biographies. The amount he tells you is something astonishing—no platitudes, no rigmarole, no common-form articles which are the staple of most biography, but, instead of them, all the facts and features of the case —pedigree, birth, father and mother, brothers and sisters, education, physiognomy, personal habits, dress, mode of speech ; nothing escapes him. It was a characteristic criticism of his, on one of Miss Martineau's American books, that the story of the way Daniel Webster used to stand before the fire with his hands in his pockets was worth all the politics, philosophy, political economy, and sociology to be found in other portions of the good lady's writings. Carlyle's eye was indeed a terrible organ : he saw everything. Emerson, writing to him, says : "I think you see as pictures every street, church, Parliament-house, barracks, baker's shop, mutton-stall, forge, wharf, and ship, and whatever stands, creeps, rolls, or swims thereabout, and make all your own." He crosses over, one rough day, to

Dublin; and he jots down in his diary the personal appearance of some unhappy creatures he never saw before or expected to see again; how men laughed, cried, swore, were all of huge interest to Carlyle. Give him a fact, he loaded you with thanks; propound a theory, you were rewarded with the most vivid abuse.

This intense love for and faculty of perceiving, what one may call the "concrete picturesque," accounts for his many hard sayings about fiction and poetry. He could not understand people being at the trouble of inventing characters and situations when history was full of men and women; when streets were crowded and continents were being peopled under their very noses. Emerson's sphynx-like utterances irritated him at times, as they well might; his orations and the like. "I long," he says, "to see some *concrete thing*, some Event—Man's Life, American Forest, or piece of Creation which this Emerson loves and wonders at, well *Emersonized*, depicted by Emerson—filled with the life of Emerson, and cast forth from him then to live by itself." * But Carlyle forgot the sluggishness of the ordinary imagination, and, for the moment, the stupendous dulness of the ordinary historian. It cannot be matter for surprise that people

* One need scarcely add, nothing of the sort ever proceeded from Emerson. How should it? Where was it to come from? When, to employ language of Mr. Arnold's own, "any poor child of nature" overhears the author of "Essays in Criticism" telling two worlds that Emerson's "Essays" are the most valuable prose contributions to the literature of the century, his soul is indeed filled "with an unutterable sense of lamentation and mourning and woe." Mr. Arnold's silence was once felt to be provoking. Wordsworth's lines kept occurring to one's mind—

"Poor Matthew, all his frolics o'er,
Is silent as a standing pool."

But it was better so.

prefer Smollett's "Humphrey Clinker" to his "History of England."

The third and last mark to which I call attention is his humor. Nowhere, surely, in the whole field of English literature, Shakespeare excepted, do you come upon a more abundant vein of humor than Carlyle's, though I admit that the quality of the ore is not of the finest. His every production is bathed in humor. This must never be, though it often has been, forgotten. He is not to be taken literally. He is always a humorist, not unfrequently a writer of burlesque, and occasionally a buffoon.

Although the spectacle of Mr. Swinburne taking Mr. Carlyle to task, as he recently did, for indelicacy, has an oddity all its own, so far as I am concerned I cannot but concur with this critic in thinking that Carlyle has laid himself open, particularly in his "Frederick the Great," to the charge one usually associates with the great and terrible name of Dean Swift; but it is the Dean with a difference, and the difference is all in Carlyle's favor. The former deliberately pelts you with dirt, as did in old days gentlemen electors their parliamentary candidates: the latter only occasionally splashes you, as does a public vehicle pursuing on a wet day its uproarious course.

These, then, I take to be Carlyle's three principal marks or notes: mysticism in thought, realism in description, and humor in both.

To proceed now to his actual literary work.

First, then, I would record the fact that he was a great critic, and this at a time when our literary criticism was a scandal. He more than any other has purged our vision and widened our horizons in this great matter. He taught us there was no sort of finality, but only nonsense, in that kind of criticism which was content with laying down some foreign masterpiece with the observation that it was

not suited for the English taste. He was, if not the first, almost the first critic, who pursued in his criticism the historical method, and sought to make us understand what we were required to judge. It has been said that Carlyle's criticisms are not final, and that he has not said the last word about Voltaire, Diderot, Richter, and Goethe. I can well believe it. But reserving "last words" for the use of the last man (to whom they would appear to belong), it is surely something to have said the *first* sensible words uttered in English on these important subjects. We ought not to forget the early days of the *Foreign and Quarterly Review*. We have critics now, quieter, more reposeful souls, taking their ease on Zion, who have entered upon a world ready to welcome them, whose keen rapiers may cut velvet better than did the two-handed broadsword of Carlyle, and whose later date may enable them to discern what their forerunner failed to perceive; but when the critics of this century come to be criticised by the critics of the next, an honorable, if not the highest place will be awarded to Carlyle.

Turn we now to the historian and biographer. History and biography much resemble one another in the pages of Carlyle, and occupy more than half his thirty-four volumes; nor is this to be wondered at, since they afford him fullest scope for his three strong points—his love of the wonderful; his love of telling a story, as the children say, "from the very beginning;" and his humor. His view of history is sufficiently lofty. History, says he, is the true epic poem, a universal divine scripture whose plenary inspiration no one out of Bedlam shall bring into question. Nor is he quite at one with the ordinary historian as to the true historical method. "The time seems coming when he who sees no world but that of courts and camps, and writes only how soldiers were drilled and shot, and how this

ministerial conjurer out-conjured that other, and then guided, or at least held, something which he called the rudder of Government, but which was rather the spigot of Taxation, wherewith in place of steering, he could tax, will pass for a more or less instructive Gazetteer, but will no longer be called an Historian."

Nor does the philosophical method of writing history please him any better :

"Truly if History is Philosophy teaching by examples, the writer fitted to compose history is hitherto an unknown man. Better were it that mere earthly historians should lower such pretensions, more suitable for omniscience than for human science, and aiming only at some picture of the things acted, which picture itself will be a poor approximation, leave the inscrutable purport of them an acknowledged secret—or at most, in reverent faith, pause over the mysterious vestiges of Him whose path is in the great deep of Time, whom History indeed reveals, but only all History and in Eternity will clearly reveal."

This same transcendental way of looking at things is very noticeable in the following view of Biography : "For, as the highest gospel was a Biography, so is the life of every good man still an indubitable gospel, and preaches to the eye and heart and whole man, so that devils even must believe and tremble, these gladdest tidings. Man is heaven-born—not the thrall of circumstances, of necessity, but the victorious subduer thereof." These, then, being his views, what are we to say of his works ? His three principal historical works are, as every one knows, "Cromwell," "The French Revolution," and "Frederick the Great," though there is a very considerable amount of other historical writing scattered up and down his works. But what are we to say of these three ? Is he, by virtue of them, entitled to the rank and influence of a great

historian? What have we a right to demand of an historian? First, surely stern veracity, which implies not merely knowledge but honesty. An historian stands in a fiduciary position towards his readers, and if he withholds from them important facts likely to influence their judgment, he is guilty of fraud, and, when justice is done in this world, will be condemned to refund all moneys he has made by his false professions, with compound interest. This sort of fraud is unknown to the law, but to nobody else. "Let me know the facts!" may well be the agonized cry of the student who finds himself floating down what Arnold has called "the vast Mississippi of falsehood, History." Secondly comes a catholic temper and way of looking at things. The historian should be a gentleman and possess a moral breadth of temperament. There should be no bitter protesting spirit about him. He should remember the world he has taken upon himself to write about is a large place, and that nobody set him up over us. Thirdly, he must be a born story-teller. If he is not this, he has mistaken his vocation. He may be a great philosopher, a useful editor, a profound scholar, and anything else his friends like to call him, except a great historian. How does Carlyle meet these requirements? His veracity, that is, his laborious accuracy, is admitted by the only persons competent to form an opinion, namely, independent investigators who have followed in his track; but what may be called the internal evidence of the case also supplies a strong proof of it. Carlyle was, as every one knows, a hero-worshipper. It is part of his mysticism. With him man, as well as God, is a spirit, either of good or evil, and as such should be either worshipped or reviled. He is never himself till he has discovered or invented a hero; and, when he has got him, he tosses and dandles him as a mother her babe. This is a terrible temptation to put in the way

of an historian, and few there be who are found able to resist it. How easy to keep back an ugly fact, sure to be a stumbling-block in the way of weak brethren! Carlyle is above suspicion in this respect. He knows no reticence. Nothing restrains him; not even the so-called proprieties of history. He may, after his boisterous fashion, pour scorn upon you for looking grave, as you read in his vivid pages of the reckless manner in which too many of his heroes drove coaches-and-six through the Ten Commandments. As likely as not he will call you a blockhead, and tell you to close your wide mouth and cease shrieking. But, dear me! hard words break no bones, and it is an amazing comfort to know the facts. Is he writing of Cromwell?—down goes everything—letters, speeches, as they were written, as they were delivered. Few great men are edited after this fashion. Were they to be so—Luther, for example—many eyes would be opened very wide. Nor does Carlyle fail in comment. If the Protector makes a somewhat distant allusion to the Barbadoes, Carlyle is at your elbow to tell you it means his selling people to work as slaves in the West Indies. As for Mirabeau, “our wild Gabriel Honoré,” well! we are told all about him; nor is Frederick let off a single absurdity or atrocity. But when we have admitted the veracity, what are we to say of the catholic temper, the breadth of temperament, the wide Shakespearian tolerance? Carlyle ought to have them all. By nature he was tolerant enough; so true a humorist could never be a bigot. When his war-paint is not on, a child might lead him. His judgments are gracious, chivalrous, tinged with a kindly melancholy and divine pity. But this mood is never for long. Some gadfly stings him: he seizes his tomahawk and is off on the trail. It must sorrowfully be admitted that a long life of opposition and indigestion, of fierce warfare with

cooks and Philistines, spoilt his temper, never of the best, and made him too often contemptuous, savage, unjust. His language then becomes unreasonable, unbearable, bad. Literature takes care of herself. You disobey her rules: well and good, she shuts her door in your face; you plead your genius: she replies, "Your temper," and bolts it. Carlyle has deliberately destroyed, by his own wilfulness, the value of a great deal he has written. It can never become classical. Alas! that this should be true of too many eminent Englishmen of our time. Language such as was, at one time, almost habitual with Mr. Ruskin, is a national humiliation, giving point to the Frenchman's sneer as to our distinguishing literary characteristic being "*la brutalité*." In Carlyle's case much must be allowed for his rhetoric and humor. In slang phrase, he always "piles it on." Does a bookseller misdirect a parcel, he exclaims, "My malison on all Blockheadisms and Torpid Infidelities of which this world is full." Still, all allowances made, it is a thousand pities; and one's thoughts turn away from this stormy old man and take refuge in the quiet haven of the Oratory at Birmingham, with his great Protagonist, who, throughout an equally long life spent in painful controversy, and wielding weapons as terrible as Carlyle's own, has rarely forgotten to be urbane, and whose every sentence is a "thing of beauty." It must, then, be owned that too many of Carlyle's literary achievements "lack a gracious somewhat." By force of his genius he "smites the rock and spreads the water;" but then, like Moses, "he desecrates, belike, the deed in doing."

Our third requirement was, it may be remembered, the gift of the story-teller. Here one is on firm ground. Where is the equal of the man who has told us the story of "The Diamond Necklace?"

It is the vogue, nowadays, to sneer at picturesque writing. Professor Seeley, for reasons of his own, appears to think that whilst politics, and, I presume religion, may be made as interesting as you please, history should be as dull as possible. This, surely, is a jaundiced view. If there is one thing it is legitimate to make more interesting than another, it is the varied record of man's life upon earth. So long as we have human hearts and await human destinies, so long as we are alive to the pathos, the dignity, the comedy of human life, so long shall we continue to rank above the philosopher, higher than the politician, the great artist, be he called dramatist or historian, who makes us conscious of the divine movement of events, and of our fathers who were before us. Of course we assume accuracy and labor in our animated historian ; though for that matter, other things being equal, I prefer a lively liar to a dull one.

Carlyle is sometimes as irresistible as "The Campbells are Coming," or "Auld Lang Syne." He has described some men and some events once and for all, and so takes his place with Thucydides, Tacitus and Gibbon. Pedants may try hard to forget this, and may in their labored nothings seek to ignore the author of "Cromwell" and "The French Revolution"; but as well might the pedestrian in Cumberland or Inverness seek to ignore Helvellyn or Ben Nevis. Carlyle is *there*, and will remain there, when the pedant of to-day has been superseded by the pedant of to-morrow.

Remembering all this, we are apt to forget his faults, his eccentricities, and vagaries, his buffooneries, his too-outrageous cynicisms and his too-intrusive egotisms, and to ask ourselves—if it be not this man, who is it then to be? Macaulay, answer some ; and Macaulay's claims are not of the sort to go unrecognized in a world which loves clearness of expression and of view only too well. Macaulay's posi-

tion never admitted of doubt. We know what to expect, and we always get it. It is like the old days of W. G. Grace's cricket. We went to see the leviathan slog for six, and we saw it. We expected him to do it, and he did it. So with Macaulay—the good Whig, as he takes up the History, settles himself down in his chair, and knows it is going to be a bad time for the Tories. Macaulay's style—his much-praised style—is ineffectual for the purpose of telling the truth about anything. It is splendid, but *splendide mendax*, and in Macaulay's case the style was the man. He had enormous knowledge, and a noble spirit; his knowledge, enriched his style and his spirit consecrated it to the service of Liberty. We do well to be proud of Macaulay; but we must add that, great as was his knowledge, great also was his ignorance, which was none the less ignorance because it was wilful; noble as was his spirit, the range of subject over which it energized was painfully restricted. He looked out upon the world, but behold, only the Whigs were good. Luther and Loyola, Cromwell and Claverhouse, Carlyle and Newman—they moved him not; their enthusiasms were delusions, and their politics demonstrable errors. Whereas, of Lord Somers and Charles first Earl Grey it is impossible to speak without emotion. But the world does not belong to the Whigs; and a great historian must be capable of sympathizing both with delusions and demonstrable errors. Mr. Gladstone has commented with force upon what he calls Macaulay's invincible ignorance, and further says that to certain aspects of a case (particularly those aspects most pleasing to Mr. Gladstone) Macaulay's mind was hermetically sealed. It is difficult to resist these conclusions; and it would appear no rash inference from them, that a man in a state of invincible ignorance and with a mind hermetically sealed, whatever else he may be—orator,

advocate, statesman, journalist, man of letters —can never be a great historian. But, indeed, when one remembers Macaulay's limited range of ideas: the commonplaceness of his morality, and of his descriptions; his absence of humor, and of pathos—for though Miss Martineau says she found one pathetic passage in the History, I have often searched for it in vain; and then turns to Carlyle—to his almost bewildering affluence of thought, fancy, feeling, humor, pathos—his biting pen, his scorching criticism, his world-wide sympathy (save in certain moods) with everything but the smug commonplace—to prefer Macaulay to him, is like giving the preference to Birket Foster over Salvator Rosa. But if it is not Macaulay, who is it to be? Mr. Hepworth Dixon or Mr. Froude? Of Bishop Stubbs and Professor Freeman it behoves every ignoramus to speak with respect. Horny-handed sons of toil, they are worthy of their wage. Carlyle has somewhere struck a distinction between the historical artist and the historical artizan. The bishop and the professor are historical artizans; artists they are not—and the great historian is a great artist.

England boasts two such artists, Edward Gibbon and Thomas Carlyle. The elder historian may be compared to one of the great Alpine roadways—sublime in its conception, heroic in its execution, superb in its magnificent uniformity of good workmanship. The younger resembles one of his native streams, pent in at times between huge rocks, and tormented into foam, and then effecting its escape down some precipice, and spreading into cool expanses below; but however varied may be its fortunes—however startling its changes—always in motion, always in harmony with the scene around. Is it gloomy? It is with the gloom of the thunder-cloud. Is it bright? It is with the radiance of the sun.

It is with some consternation that I ap-

proach the subject of Carlyle's politics. One handles them as does an inspector of police a parcel reported to contain dynamite. The *Latter-Day Pamphlets* might not unfitly be labelled "Dangerous Explosives."

In this matter of politics there were two Carlyles; and, as generally happens in such cases, his last state was worse than his first. Up to 1843, he not unfairly might be called a Liberal—of uncertain vote it may be—a man difficult to work with, and impatient of discipline, but still aglow with generous heat; full of large-hearted sympathy with the poor and oppressed, and of intense hatred of the cruel and shallow sophistries that then passed for maxims, almost for axioms, of government. In the year 1819, when the yeomanry round Glasgow was called out to keep down some dreadful monsters called "Radicals," Carlyle describes how he met an advocate of his acquaintance hurrying along, musket in hand, to his drill on the Links. "You should have the like of this," said he, cheerily patting his gun. "Yes," was the reply, "but I haven't yet quite settled on which side." And when he did make his choice, on the whole he chose rightly. The author of that noble pamphlet "*Chartism*," published in 1840, was at least once a Liberal. Let me quote a passage that has stirred to effort many a generous heart now cold in death: "Who would suppose "that Education were a thing which had to "be advocated on the ground of local expe- "diency, or indeed on any ground? As if it "stood not on the basis of an everlasting "duty, as a prime necessity of man! It is "a thing that should need no advocating; "much as it does actually need. To impart "the gift of thinking to those who cannot "think, and yet who could in that case think: "this, one would imagine, was the first function "a government had to set about discharging. "Were it not a cruel thing to see, in any prov-

"ince of an empire, the inhabitants living all
"mutilated in their limbs, each strong man
"with his right arm lamed? How much
"crueller to find the strong soul with its eyes
"still sealed—its eyes extinct, so that it sees
"not! Lig'it has come into the world; but
"to this poor peasant it has come in vain.
"For six thousand years the sons of Adam, in
"sleepless effort, have been devising, doing,
"discovering; in mysterious infinite, indis-
"soluble communion, warring, a little band of
"brothers, against the black empire of ne-
"cessity and night; they have accomplished
"such a conquest and conquests; and to this
"man it is all as if it had not been. The
"four-and-twenty letters of the alphabet are
"still runic enigmas to him. He passes by on
"the other side; and that great spiritual king-
"dom, the toil-won conquest of his own broth-
"ers, all that his brothers have conquered,
"is a thing not extant for him. An invisible
"empire; he knows it not—suspects it not.
"And is not this his withal; the conquest of
"his own brothers, the lawfully acquired pos-
"session of all men? Baleful enchantment
"lies over him, from generation to generation;
"he knows not that such an empire is his—
"that such an empire is his at all. . . .
"Heavier wrong is not done under the sun.
"It lasts from year to year, from century to
"century; the blinded sire slaves himself
"out, and leaves a blinded son; and men,
"made in the image of God, continue as two-
"legged beasts of labor; and in the largest
"empire of the world it is a debate whether a
"small fraction of the revenue of one day
"shall, after thirteen centuries, be laid out on
"it or not laid out on it. Have we governors?
"Have we teachers? Have we had a Church
"these thirteen hundred years? What is an
"overseer of souls, an archoverseer, archie-
"piscopus? Is he something? If so, let him

"lay his hand on his heart and say what thing!"

Nor was the man who in 1843 wrote as follows altogether at sea in politics :

"Of Time Bill, Factory Bill, and other such Bills, the present editor has no authority to speak. He knows not, it is for others than he to know, in what specific ways it may be feasible to interfere with legislation between the workers and the master-workers—knows only and sees that legislative interference, and interferences not a few, are indispensable. Nay, interference has begun; there are already factory inspectors. Perhaps there might be mine inspectors too. Might there not be furrow-field inspectors withal, to ascertain how, on 7s. 6d. a week, a human family does live? Again, are not sanitary regulations possible for a legislature? Baths, free air, a wholesome temperature, ceilings twenty feet high, might be ordained by Act of Parliament in all establishments licensed as mills. There are such mills already extant—honor to the builders of them. The legislature can say to others, 'Go you and do likewise—better if you can.'"

By no means a bad programme for 1843; and a good part of it has been carried out, but with next to no aid from Carlyle.

The Radical party has struggled on as best it might, without the author of "Chartism" and "The French Revolution"—

"They have marched prospering, not through his presence;

Songs have inspired them, not from his lyre;"

and it is no party spirit that leads one to regret the change of mind which prevented the later public life of this great man, and now the memory of it, from being enriched with something better than a five-pound note for Governor Eyre.

But it could not be helped. What brought

about the rupture was his losing faith in the ultimate destiny of man upon earth. No more terrible loss can be sustained. It is of both heart and hope. He fell back upon heated visions of heaven-sent heroes, devoting their early days for the most part to hoodwinking the people, and their latter ones, more heroically, to shooting them.

But it is foolish to quarrel with results, and we may learn something even from the later Carlyle. We lay down John Bright's Reform Speeches, and take up Carlyle and light upon a passage like this : "Inexpressibly delirious seems to me the puddle of Parliament and public upon what it calls Reform Measure, that is to say, the calling in of new supplies of blockheadism, gullibility, briability, amenability to beer and balderdash, by way of amending the woes we have had from previous supplies of that bad article." This view must be accounted for as well as Mr. Bright's. We shall do well to remember, with Carlyle, that the best of all Reform Bills is that which each citizen passes in his own breast, where it is pretty sure to meet with strenuous opposition. The reform of ourselves is no doubt an heroic measure never to be overlooked, and, in the face of accusations of gullibility, briability, amenability to beer and balderdash, our poor humanity can only stand abashed, and feebly demur to the bad English in which the charges are conveyed. But we can't all lose hope. We remember Sir David Ramsay's reply to Lord Rea, once quoted by Carlyle himself. Then said his lordship : "Well, God mend all." "Nay, by God, Donald, we must help Him to mend it!" It is idle to stand gaping at the heavens, waiting to feel the thong of some hero of questionable morals and robust conscience; and therefore, unless Reform Bills can be shown to have checked purity of election, to have increased the stupidity of electors, and generally to have promoted corrup-

tion—which notoriously they have not—we may allow Carlyle to make his exit “swearing,” and regard their presence in the Statute Book, if not with rapture, at least, with equanimity.

But it must not be forgotten that the battle is still raging—the issue is still uncertain. Mr. Froude is still free to assert that the “*post-mortem*” will prove Carlyle was right. His political sagacity no reader of “Frederick” can deny; his insight into hidden causes and far-away effects was keen beyond precedent—nothing he ever said deserves contempt, though it may merit anger. If we would escape his conclusion, we must not altogether disregard his premises. Bankruptcy and death are the final heirs of imposture and make-believes. The old faiths and forms are worn too threadbare by a thousand disputation to bear the burden of the new democracy, which, if it is not merely to win the battle but to hold the country, must be ready with new faiths and forms of her own. They are within her reach if she but knew it; they lie to her hand: surely they will not escape her grasp! If they do not, then, in the glad day when worship is once more restored to man, he will with becoming generosity forget much that Carlyle has written, and remembering more, rank him amongst the prophets of humanity.

Carlyle’s poetry can only be exhibited in long extracts, which would be here out of place, and might excite controversy as to the meaning of words, and draw down upon me the measureless malice of the metricists. There are, however, passages in “Sartor Resartus” and the “French Revolution” which have long appeared to me to be the sublimest poetry of the century; and it was therefore with great pleasure that I found Mr. Justice Stephen, in his book on “Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity,” introducing a quotation from the 8th chapter of the 3rd book of “Sartor Resartus,” with the remark that “it is perhaps the

most memorable utterance of the greatest poet of the age."

As for Carlyle's religion, it may be said he had none, inasmuch as he expounded no creed and put his name to no confession. This is the pendartry of the schools. He taught us religion, as cold water and fresh air teach us health, by rendering the conditions of disease well nigh impossible. For more than half a century, with superhuman energy, he struggled to establish the basis of all religions, "reverence and godly fear." "Love not pleasure, love God; this is the everlasting Yea."

One's remarks might here naturally come to an end, with a word or two of hearty praise of the brave course of life led by the man who awhile back stood the acknowledged head of English letters. But the present time is not the happiest for a panegyric on Carlyle. It would be in vain to deny that the brightness of his reputation underwent an eclipse, visible everywhere, by the publication of his "*Reminiscences*." They surprised most of us, pained not a few, and hugely delighted that ghastly crew, the wreckers of humanity, who are never so happy as when employed in pulling down great reputations to their own miserable levels. When these "baleful creatures," as Carlyle would have called them, have lit upon any passage indicative of conceit or jealousy or spite, they have fastened upon it and screamed over it, with a pleasure but ill-concealed and with a horror but ill-feigned. "Behold," they exclaim, "your hero robbed of the nimbus his inflated style cast around him—this preacher and fault-finder reduced to his principal parts: and lo! the main ingredient is most unmistakably 'bile !'"

The critic, however, has nought to do either with the sighs of the sorrowful, "mourning when a hero falls," or with the scorn of the malicious, rejoicing, as did Bunyan's Juryman, Mr. Live-loose, when Faithful was condemned

to die : " I could never endure him, for he would always be condemning my way."

The critic's task is to consider the book itself, *i.e.*, the nature of its contents, and how it came to be written at all.

When this has been done, there will not be found much demanding moral censure ; whilst the reader will note with delight, applied to the trifling concerns of life, those extraordinary gifts of observation and apprehension which have so often charmed him in the pages of history and biography.

These peccant volumes contain but four sketches : one of his father, written in 1832 ; the other three, of Edward Irving, Lord Jeffrey, and Mrs. Carlyle, all written after the death of the last-named, in 1866.

The only fault that has been found with the first sketch is, that in it Carlyle hazards the assertion that Scotland does not now contain his father's like. It ought surely to be possible to dispute this opinion without exhibiting emotion. To think well of their forbears is one of the few weaknesses of Scotchmen. This sketch, as a whole, must be carried to Carlyle's credit, and is a permanent addition to literature. It is pious, after the high Roman fashion. It satisfies our finest sense of the fit and proper. Just exactly so should a literate son write of an illiterate peasant father. How immeasurable seems the distance between the man from whom proceeded the thirty-four volumes we have been writing about and the Calvinistic mason who didn't even know his Burns !—and yet here we find the whole distance spanned by filial love.

The sketch of Lord Jeffrey is inimitable. One was getting tired of Jeffrey, and prepared to give him the go-by, when Carlyle creates him afresh, and, for the first time, we see the bright little man bewitching us by what he is, disappointing us by what he is not. The spiteful remarks the sketch contains may be

considered, along with those of the same nature to be found only too plentifully in the remaining two papers.

After careful consideration of the worst of these remarks, Mrs. Oliphant's explanation seems the true one; they are most of them sparkling bits of Mrs. Carlyle's conversation. She, happily for herself, had a lively wit, and, perhaps not so happily, a biting tongue, and was, as Carlyle tells us, accustomed to make him laugh, as they drove home together from London crushes, by far from genial observations on her fellow-creatures, little recking—how should she?—that what was so lightly uttered was being engraven on the tablets of the most marvellous of memories, and was destined long afterwards to be written down in grim earnest by a half-frenzied old man, and printed, in cold blood, by an English gentleman.

The horrible description of Mrs. Irving's personal appearance, and the other stories of the same connection, are recognized by Mrs. Oliphant as in substance Mrs. Carlyle's; whilst the malicious account of Mrs. Basil Montague's head-dress is attributed by Carlyle himself to his wife. Still, after dividing the total, there is a good helping for each, and blame would justly be Carlyle's due if we did not remember, as we are bound to do, that, interesting as these three sketches are, their interest is pathological, and ought never to have been given us. Mr. Froude should have read them in tears, and burnt them in fire. There is nothing surprising in the state of mind which produced them. They are easily accounted for by our sorrow-laden experience. It is a familiar feeling which prompts a man, suddenly bereft of one whom he alone really knew and loved, to turn in his fierce indignation upon the world, and deride its idols whom all are praising, and which yet to him seem ugly by the side of one of whom no one speaks. To

be angry with such a sentence as "scribbling Sands and Eliots, not fit to compare with my incomparable Jeannie," is at once inhuman and ridiculous. This is the language of the heart, not of the head. It is no more criticism than is the trumpeting of a wounded elephant zoölogy.

Happy is the man who at such a time holds both peace and pen; but unhappiest of all is he who, having dipped his sorrow into ink, entrusts the manuscript to a romantic historian.

The two volumes of the "Life," and the three volumes of Mrs. Carlyle's "Correspondence," unfortunately did not pour oil upon the troubled waters. The partizanship they evoked was positively indecent. Mrs. Carlyle had her troubles and her sorrows, as have most women who live under the same roof with a man of creative genius; but of one thing we may be quite sure, that she would have been the first, to use her own expressive language, to require God "particularly to damn" her impertinent sympathizers. As for Mr. Froude, he may yet discover his Nemesis in the spirit of an angry woman whose privacy he has invaded, and whose diary he has most wantonly published.

These dark clouds are ephemeral. They will roll away, and we shall once more gladly recognize the lineaments of an essentially lofty character, of one who, though a man of genius and of letters, neither outraged society nor stooped to it; was neither a rebel nor a slave; who in poverty scorned wealth; who never mistook popularity for fame; but from the first assumed, and throughout maintained, the proud attitude of one whose duty it was to teach and not to tickle mankind.

Brother-dunces, lend me your ears! not to crop, but that I may whisper into their fury depths: "Do not quarrel with genius. We have none ourselves, and yet are so constituted that we cannot live without it."

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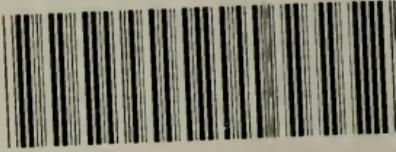
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